

EPA'S OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE SUMMARY:

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is the primary office for all U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) internal and external communications. The Associate Administrator for Public Affairs (AA OPA) serves as the principal advisor to the Administrator on all issues concerning short-term and long-term strategic communications. **The Assistant Administrator is assisted by the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator for OPA, the agency's senior career communications official.**

OPA is charged with facilitating the exchange of information and broadly communicating EPA's mission with the media, public, Congress, tribes, and state and local governments. OPA works hand-in-hand with the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs and the Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education. **OPA also coordinates closely with the Communications Directors in the HQ program offices (NPMs) and the regional Public Affairs Directors and meets with this team daily to facilitate coordination and collaboration.**

OPA:

- Serves as the agency's gateway to the news media for official agency announcements, press releases and statements, speeches, Congressional and public hearing testimony, biographies of principal officials, and other documents of public interest.
- Prepares speeches for the Administrator.
- Coordinates with the Office of Emergency Management—the agency's lead for external messaging for emergency response activities, including implementation of the agency's Crisis Communication Plan.
- Serves as the agencywide point of contact for the planning, developing, and reviewing of all agency print, promotional, display, audiovisual and broadcast products intended for the public.
- Directs agency multilingual, Limited English Proficiency, outreach and communications efforts.
- Manages EPA's web content and social media presence.
- Communicates with EPA personnel via agencywide electronic mass mailers on a variety of topics.

OPA includes:

- Office of the Press Secretary/OPA AA's Office: 8 appointees, including Press Secretaries, Speechwriter, Social Media Lead, Digital Strategists; and 3 career staff
- Office of Media Relations: 3 career staff
- Office of Multi-Media: 9 career staff, including videographers, a/v techs, and the official EPA photographer
- Office of Web Communications (includes social media and multi-lingual activities): 9 career staff
- Office of Internal Communications: 4 career staff
- Senior Risk Communication Advisor and staff: 2 career staff
- Immediate Office – 4 career staff

BACKGROUND:

- During the last Fiscal Year, OPA issued over 1,500 press releases and responded to approximately 8,500 media inquiries
- In terms of digital media, OPA receives over 4.7 million views annually on www.epa.gov pages and the main Twitter and Facebook accounts combined to achieve about 65 million impressions and reach annually.
- Risk communication is deeply connected to the agency's success across a wide range of topics, hazards, and audiences. Ultimately, EPA's ability to protect human health and the environment relies on our ability to communicate effectively to many audiences. In the past year, we brought on a Senior Risk Communication Advisor into a new role where she advises the Administrator on risk communication and coordinates efforts across the agency's offices and regions, improving both the consistency and quality of our risk communication efforts. The advisor is centrally located and strategically placed to connect across our offices and regions and most directly with outreach and communications efforts at the agency. **(Please also reference the cross-agency Risk Communication briefing paper)**

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

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|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> States | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Agencies |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGOS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Governments | | | | |

MOVING FORWARD:

EPA Public Website Update

- EPA's Office of Mission Support (OMS) and OPA are working together to update the agency's public website from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8, which is a major update to the web content management system and must be completed before the agency's contract support for Drupal 7 ends in February 2021. The transition requires a move to the cloud and will ensure that all content on the website will comply with the [U.S. Web Design System](#) standards and [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act](#).
- The migration requires a concerted effort by content owners across the agency to review and prepare their content for migration. Though the migration was originally scheduled for mid-October, it has been delayed until mid-December with a goal to publish the migrated content in the new web CMS around January 4, 2021. Following the migration, all content owners will review their web content for consistency, accessibility, and user experience.

EPA Intranet Modernization

- EPA's Intranet Council voted on September 3, 2020, to adopt Drupal as the enterprise intranet content management system. As part of EPA's Intranet Modernization effort, the new standard aims to improve

the digital experience for employees and bring the site into compliance with the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act](#).

- The adoption of an enterprise-wide intranet CMS sets the stage for establishing a single platform for managing the EPA's most important internal content making it easier for employees to create, publish, find, and use the internal information they need. OMS and OPA are working in partnership with the Intranet Council to build and deploy the new Drupal-based Intranet content management system in FY21.

EPA Social Media Modernization

- OPA worked closely with OMS to adopt the use of Salesforce Social Studio and Command Center as an agency solution to managing social media content across 80+ social media accounts. The transition will enhance EPA's ability to amplify messaging across all its accounts and to produce valuable analytics to include public sentiment measurements.
- The adoption of an enterprise-wide social media solution sets the stage for establishing a single platform to manage the EPA's social media content making it easier for public affairs staff to create, publish, share, and monitor information from multiple accounts. OPA will be working in partnership with each regional and program office throughout October to transition their social media accounts into the new Salesforce Social Studio tool.

Risk Communication

In the past year we developed a scientifically grounded risk communication training platform. In our ongoing work:

- OPA will continue our focus on risk communication training, expanding access to a broader circle of EPA staff and our state, tribal, local, and federal partners.
- OPA will increase the agency's reliance on best practices through the implementation of many of the products currently under development.
- OPA will increase our academic partnerships to better understand our audiences and bring more proven practices into practice faster.
- OPA will continue to expand the size of our dedicated risk communication staff to manage what amounts to a fundamental culture change at the agency.
- **(Please also reference the cross-agency Risk Communication briefing paper)**

LEAD OFFICE/REGION: REGION 9

OTHER KEY OFFICES/REGIONS: ALL NPMS AND
REGIONS

There are Communications Directors in all NPMs and Public Affairs Directors in all 10 regional offices. OPA coordinates closely with the Lead Region for the AO on all appropriate matters.

